

Hobcaw Barony

A BLEND OF NATURE, SCIENCE & EDUCATION

By Lee G. Brockington



Get in touch with skins, skulls and the area's history at the Visitor Center.



Belle Baruch's inheritance, the family's winter home, created a center for teaching and research.

In a day when pristine coastal land grows scarcer every year, Hobcaw Barony stands as a 60-mile testament to the natural beauty of South Carolina's seashore. From a Native American word meaning "between the waters," Hobcaw sits between the waters of the Atlantic Ocean and Winyah Bay between Georgetown and Charleston and forms the largest stretch of protected property on the East Coast.

First drawn to the place as a hunting property, Bernard M. Baruch, New York financier, advisor to presidents and a native South Carolinian, bought the preserve between 1905 and 1907. Evenings in the original Baruch home were spent in the august company of guests such as Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, who came to share ideas and a good meal, as well as to hunt duck, deer, turkey, hog and quail. Raised in these surroundings, Baruch's daughter Belle grew to love the land and became an avid sailor, hunter, equestrian and pilot. The history of Hobcaw is filled with tales of a president stuck in the marshy pluff mud, initiations of first-time visitors with a snipe hunt and hunts that resulted in the bagging of as many as 100 ducks—the famous "100-Duck Days."

However, it is Belle Baruch's legacy that guests enjoy today. As the last of the family to own what was once 11 individual plantations, Belle created a trust in 1964 to ensure the future of the property against development. Her goal was to create a reserve, held in perpetuity for research and education.

Today, the land is a living, breathing outdoor laboratory of all that is Lowcountry nature. The state's universities use the area to research marine and coastal sciences, forestry and wildlife. The Visitor Center is open Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm (except certain holidays), with access to the full 17,500 acres available by guided tour. And the tours are exceptional. Informative tours glimpse past centuries through the Baruch's hunting lodge, the grounds and stable at Belle W. Baruch's home and Friendfield, a 19th-century slave village. Special-interest programs offered throughout the year may feature cemetery studies, bicycle trips, crabbing and fishing classes, history lectures and guided nature walks.

Today, Hobcaw Barony is just as Belle envisioned: the perfect blend of nature, science and education, preserved for generations to come.

